

VZCZCXRO9296
OO RUEHBC RUEHCHI RUEHDBU RUEHDE RUEHDT RUEHHM RUEHKUK RUEHLH RUEHNH
RUEHPW RUEHROV
DE RUEHKL #1001/01 1590537
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 080537Z JUN 07
FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9425
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNISL/ISLAMIC COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/USCINCENT MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KUALA LUMPUR 001001

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/06/2017

TAGS: [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [KISL](#) [OVIP](#) [MY](#)

SUBJECT: GENERAL PACE'S JUNE 4 MEETINGS WITH PM ABDULLAH
AND DPM NAJIB

Classified By: CDA David B. Shear, reasons 1.4 (b, d).

Summary

1. (C) Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi and Deputy Prime Minister/Defense Minister Najib Tun Razak endorsed current military-to-military cooperation with the U.S. in their separate meetings on June 4 with Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Peter Pace and the Ambassador. DPM Najib described the bilateral military relationship as "outstanding" and called for the two countries to "do more of what we are doing now." General Pace congratulated Malaysia on its success in reducing piracy in the Straits of Malacca and Najib described Malaysia's priority in safeguarding Sabah. Abdullah commented on East Asia security, noting the importance of ASEAN Plus 3 and ARF, and the necessity of multilateral engagement with China. Najib remarked that the security situation in southern Thailand was worsening and he appeared anxious for Malaysia to assume a mediating role. Abdullah focused much of his comments on Muslim world issues, calling for engagement with Hamas, talks without preconditions with Iran, and the avoidance of military action against Iran. Abdullah said intra-Muslim fighting in Iraq "is very embarrassing for me," and remarked on the need to build national unity in Iraq to allow for the pull-out of U.S. forces. General Pace briefed on the Iraq and Afghanistan situations and called on Malaysia to do its part to bolster governance in Afghanistan. General Pace commended Malaysia for its peacekeeping leadership. The General also explained plans to pursue greater common understanding among nations of the global terrorist threat. The atmospherics in both meetings were friendly. PM Abdullah conveyed an invitation for President Bush to attend Malaysia's 50th independence anniversary celebration on August 31. End Summary.

Malaysian Leaders Endorse Bilateral Military Cooperation

2. (C) General Pace, accompanied by the Ambassador, called on Prime Minister Abdullah and Deputy Prime Minister/Defense Minister Najib for separate meetings on June 4, during General Pace's June 3-4 working visit to Malaysia. Malaysian Armed Forces Chief General Abdul Aziz Zainal joined both meetings. General Pace thanked both Malaysian leaders for their good cooperation with the U.S. military, including an increasing number of U.S. ship visits, joint military exercises and trainings. The interactions with Malaysia's military were beneficial for U.S. forces. General Pace noted that we were pleased to have a new ability to provide some

needed radars for use in Sabah. He added that the U.S. hoped to find more ways to work together with the Malaysian military in line with Malaysia's interests and sovereignty.

13. (C) PM Abdullah conveyed his appreciation for U.S. military engagement with Malaysia and stated that "we should continue our defense cooperation" for the security interests of both countries. DPM Najib described bilateral military cooperation as "outstanding," and he expressed appreciation for U.S. assistance particularly with training, including IMET, and joint exercises. U.S. Navy port calls were "well received" and these sent "a good signal to the outside world" that the U.S. has "a high level of confidence" in Malaysia and its security. The exchange of intelligence at the strategic and tactical level was also beneficial. Najib said U.S. assistance was in line with his own concept of sharing the security burden represented by Malaysia's maritime boundaries, noting that "we are stretched thin in many areas." In terms of future bilateral military cooperation, Najib stated that the U.S. and Malaysia "should do more of what we are doing now."

Reducing Piracy in Straits of Malacca; Guarding Sabah

14. (C) General Pace congratulated the Malaysian leaders on the significant reduction in piracy in the Straits of Malacca, with both the PM and DPM noting their satisfaction with the drop in shipping insurance premiums. DPM Najib said the situation in the Straits was under control and noted that Malaysia has only one active area of military operations, namely Sabah. While vulnerable due to its proximity to the southern Philippines and Indonesian Borneo, Malaysia's deployment of soldiers to islands off Sabah had resulted in a

KUALA LUMP 00001001 002 OF 003

long period of time without any security incidences.

Security in East Asia, China

15. (C) PM Abdullah noted the importance of China, Japan and Korea in East Asian security, as reflected in the ASEAN Plus 3 arrangement. He expressed appreciation for the U.S. security role on the Korean peninsula and for careful management of the China-Taiwan dynamic. While Taiwan remained an important trading partner for Malaysia, occasionally China felt a need to remind Malaysia of the one China policy. Abdullah remarked that China's gradual opening up reflected a positive development. Malaysia did not view China as a threat and believed in engaging China, including through multilateral mechanisms. For example, China's involvement in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) carried with it responsibilities, such as multilateral engagement over its competing claims in the South China Sea. ASEAN as an organization was "doing well and progressing," Abdullah concluded. General Pace agreed with the PM's view of China's development as a great opportunity, rather than a threat, and noted that the U.S. shares Abdullah's satisfaction with ASEAN's progress.

Najib Anxious for Role in Southern Thailand

16. (C) DPM Najib raised southern Thailand as an area of concern. The situation in southern Thailand "is getting worse" and is "not under control," although so far the insurgents have not linked up with terrorist groups. Malaysia wished to play a role in resolving the southern insurgency, but had been reined back by the Thai government. "We wish we could do more," Najib said. Comparing Malaysia's role in mediating in the Mindanao conflict, the DPM said, "we would be happy to host talks," but Bangkok is "too sensitive" over the issue, and in any event the current Bangkok government has only "a short shelf life." Najib worried that the Thai government is deploying the wrong type of troops to

the south, namely ill-trained "rangers" who have a poor human rights record. He commented that the Muslim population in the South sensed, since the time of Thaksin's leadership, they were victim of larger agenda to undermine their religion and way of life, leading to deep mistrust of the government. The situation in southern Thailand "cannot be allowed to fester too long," Najib concluded.

Abdullah Focuses on Muslim World Issues

¶7. (C) After noting that Malaysia has investment interests in many countries, PM Abdullah focused much of his comments on Muslim world issues: Palestine, Iran, and Iraq. (Note: Abdullah also presented his ideas for resolving the humanitarian crisis in Darfur, see septel. End Note.) Malaysia remained concerned by the situation in Palestine and continued to conduct efforts to foster a Government of National Unity among the Palestinian factions. To this end, Malaysia engaged Hamas leaders. Abdullah noted that Hamas' friendship with Iran, despite their respective Sunni-Shi'a beliefs, grew out of Hamas' isolation by other parties and Iran's willingness to assist. On Iran, Abdullah reiterated that he had told President Achmadinejad "in no uncertain terms" Malaysia and the OIC could not support the development of nuclear weapons, though nuclear power is another matter. Abdullah said there was no realistic alternative to talking with Iran, and this he believed should be done "without conditions." Use of force against Iran, "another military adventure," would be "disastrous" and "worse than Iraq." "That's my very strong feeling," the Prime Minister added.

¶8. (C) PM Abdullah said he was concerned about violence in Iraq. "Muslims fighting Muslims is very embarrassing for me," PM Abdullah stated. Abdullah supported efforts to foster Iraqi unity "to avoid a bloodbath" so that U.S. forces could leave Iraq quickly. The PM noted in passing that he had planned to be in Afghanistan at this time, but had postponed the visit and would conduct a video conference with Kabul instead. (Note: Malaysia's state news agency reported that PM Abdullah delivered a live address via video link June 4 to a Kabul conference on "Effective Private Sector Contribution to Development of Afghanistan. End Note.)

¶9. (C) DPM Najib said he saw the security situation in

KUALA LUMP 00001001 003 OF 003

Afghanistan as "dicey." Nevertheless, he urged the U.S. and its allies to "finish the job in Afghanistan" by soundly defeating the Taliban and Al Qaeda. Najib described the Taliban as a "gross aberration of Islam" that sought to "bring Islam back to the Stone Age." Najib was unaware of requests by the Afghan government to train Afghan personnel. Najib noted that he had agreed to receive the visit of an Iraqi Vice President in the near future.

¶10. (C) General Pace stated U.S. support for a diplomatic solution to Iran's nuclear ambitions. He briefed the PM and DPM on the situations in Iraq and Afghanistan, noting that the U.S. did not see a military solution in Iraq. Security represented only one element, alongside the critical issues of governance and the economy. In Al Anbar province Sunni leaders had unified to reject Al Qaeda and restore security; leaders in Baghdad and Basra needed to follow this example, promote national unity and oppose sectarian violence. Improved governance and development were also necessary components in Afghanistan, and General Pace urged both Malaysian leaders to support Afghanistan, possibly through the training of government officials.

Pace Commends Malaysia for Peacekeeping Leadership

¶11. (C) General Pace commended Malaysia for its continued leadership in international peacekeeping, noting in particular Malaysia's deployment to Lebanon under UNIFIL and

pointing out that Malaysia operated a world class peacekeeping training center. PM Abdullah noted with a smile that Malaysia's offer to send more troops to Lebanon had been rejected by the UN. Najib highlighted the success of Malaysian forces deployed to East Timor, where Malaysians overcame initial suspicions by practicing good civil-military relations ("our strong suit").

Seeking Common Ground on Terrorism

¶12. (C) General Pace noted that many countries have unique perspectives on the nature of the terrorist threat. Without a greater sharing of views, we will face frustrations in the fight against terrorists based on misunderstandings. Pace explained that he would seek ways to open a wider dialogue on terrorism and share more information among countries. PM Abdullah said he also feared that a lack of common understanding of terrorism would lead to problems. DPM Najib welcomed further dialogue on terrorism: "We will share our perspective as a moderate, tolerant, Muslim country." Najib added that one "cannot bomb terrorists into submission," and it would be important to understand and address the root causes that foster terrorism. At the same time, no one should excuse the actions of terrorists, such as Malaysian Jemaah Islamiyah bomber Azahari, who killed innocent people.

Abdullah Extends Invitation for President Bush

¶13. (C) The atmospherics in General Pace's meetings with the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister were friendly and positive. PM Abdullah noted his preference for "very informal" dialogue, "even when I speak with President Bush." Abdullah asked after President Bush's health, referred to the President as "a tough man," and asked General Pace to convey his best wishes to the President. As Abdullah concluded the meeting, he extended an invitation for President Bush to attend Malaysia's 50th independence anniversary celebration on August 31.

SHEAR